

QUEEN TARA

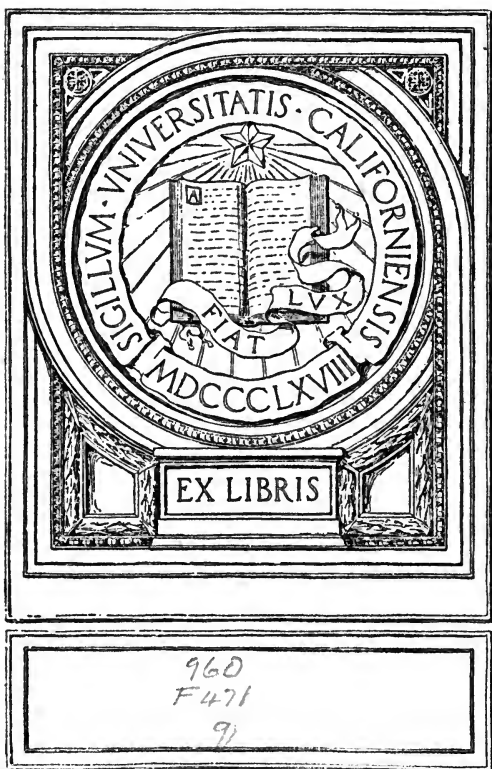
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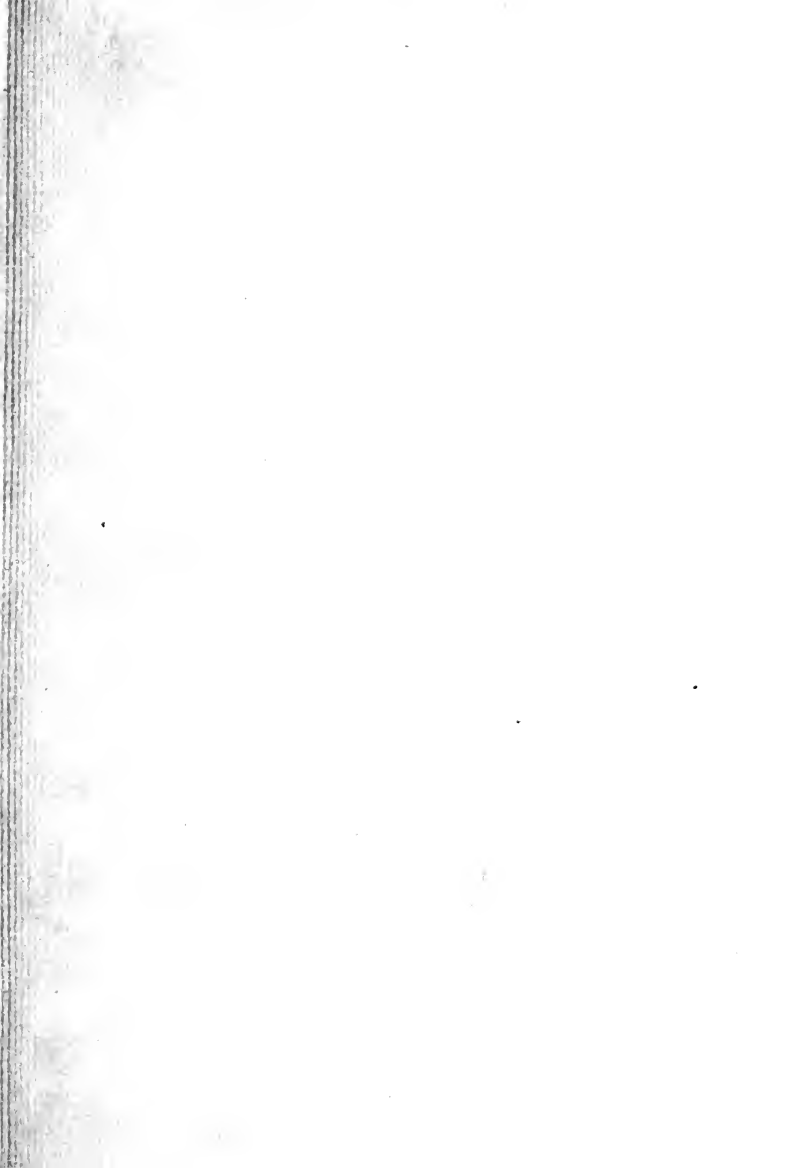
DARRELL FIGGIS

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QUEEN TARA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A VISION OF LIFE: and Other
Poems. 1909

THE CRUCIBLES OF TIME: and
Other Poems. 1911

BROKEN ARCS. A Novel. 1911

SHAKESPEARE: A Study. 1911

STUDIES AND APPRECIATIONS.
1912

QUEEN TARA

BY

DARRELL FIGGIS



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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JULIAN, *King of Illyricum.*

SERGE }
PETER } *his Brothers-in-law.*

ANTONY, *Julian's Minister.*

STEPHEN, *Captain of the King's Guard.*

LYOF, *Lieutenant of the King's Guard.*

BRABO }
MARK } *Officers in Army.*

Other Officers.

HAGEN.

Servants.

TARA, *Queen of Illyricum.*

CATHNA, *her Maid.*

SCENE.—*The King's Palace.*

QUEEN TARA

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Council Room in Palace. Discovers ANTONY and STEPHEN in conversation.*

Stephen. You will await the king then?

Antony. Certainly!

Why, surely, I will. And so I think will you.

For, Stephen, see! whate'er the king has done,

Howe'er the strange vagary of his choice

Strains our belief, still he claims loyalty.

While, for my part, I love him.

Stephen. So I too.

Yet, yet—you know the business toward?

Antony. I do.

The same old theme: or rather, and more truly,

The new theme, pluckt at o'er its strings of love

By folly's twitchy fingers. Yes, I know it.

And yet it quails me not.

Stephen. You, Antony,

I think, should be put up for a saint in Heaven.

The earth should mumble at you, and sing you praise.

For my poor self—oh, God, it stirs my anger!

She who once stitcht his socks; who, over it all,
Tosses him years on years to fleet her up—
I hated it then: and to this very hour
I loathe it so, I think I'd pluck her down
Before his very face.

Antony. Hush! not so loud!

Stephen. Oh, what care I! I have faults enough, I know,
But cowardice and fear are not of them.

Antony. Fear is one thing; but prudence is another
Friend Stephen.

Stephen. Right, oh, right! You men of ice
Have a pernicious habit of achieving
The easy balance of dead verities.
Altho' you are not of ice: I have seen your tears,
I have heard your laughter.

Antony. I interrupted you.

Stephen. Did you? Yes, Antony, I love our king.
It scalds my eyes to see him given over
To this soft, subtle woman, eaten of guile,
Playing her music thro' him. To my love
Witness how I have stood like a wide wall
Stemming our Brabo's waters of fury. Oh,
But this last trick!

Antony. Softer, for both our sakes.

Stephen. Oh, pest!—Look you, not now content with
a crown,
With a throne, to brave the ancient Illyrican pride
By pushing her own brothers to chief seats,

To opulence and to power—oh, my good God!

It foots the very peaks of insolence.

Antony, and more! it melts our lesser bonds

By touching our first loyalty to our country.

I am quit of them.

Antony. No, no: nothing quits you.—

But you'll not stay?

Stephen. Not I!

What, hear them nominated to new power?

Oh!—Yet, my best of Antonys, to-night

In Brabo's chambers we discuss it all.

Now, you be there!

Antony. And how if I discharge

The tangled business of the things you say

Into the ears of those you speak against?

Stephen. Then do so, as you please. I take no pledge,

I'll have no oath breathed to an empty air.

To trust, man, is to trust. If you divulge,

Or break the secret casket of our thoughts,

It is your deed, and in your own fixed soul

You have your answer. Will you come?

Antony. I will.

I will, indeed. And, Stephen, however our roads

Wander apart, I'll pluck all knowledge of that

Out of my memory. It will be my due;

For spite too hot a will, you are set amongst

The country's noblest.

Stephen. Tush, tush! I must go.

QUEEN TARA

My men are ranged about, and other duties
Excuse my absence here.—Oh, Antony,
A moment: Have you ever heard it told—
By any wind that breathing down the world
Hints tender details—that this amorous lady,
Whom we call queen, and whose soft hand we kiss,
Had once a lover, whiskered and square-browed,
With something rough in's blood; and, it is said—
Tho' Heaven forbid we should believe such things—
Who postured as her husband once?

Antony. I have.

I do not think it true. But true or false,
What profit swells there in it, whether for you,
Or me, or any of us, by wagging tongues
In mischievous declaration of a tale?
It could but wound the king.

Stephen. Ay, that is true.

But yet, there is a man that in each point
Reduplicates the manner of my description,
Lately come to this city. He was seen
But yesterday asking about the palace
How best to approach her majesty.

Antony. Stephen, no!

It cannot, must not, be.

Stephen. But, Antony, yes!

It is, and therefore can be.

Antony. Terrible!

Horrible! I do not love our new-got queen—

'Tho', mark you, for pure fascination's sake,
And for those arts that make the senses swim,
Her like were hard to find—but her disproof
Would break the king to death.

Stephen. Then let us deny
That he exists; and, peacefully and serenely,
Float the gay river under Summer's plumage.
Yes, let us!

Antony. Why mock at it? 'Tis too vexed
And cross-perplexed a theme. But tell me more:
That is, if you know more.

Stephen. Do I not hear
Our love-sick court? Well, Antony, I must go.
To our next meeting!

Antony. No, I'll come with you.
Stay mocking, Stephen, by your love for me,
And give me some relation of it all.
Our fingers should fly quickly to the throat
Of this perplexity. Here!

*[They go out together. Presently enter JULIAN,
TARA; also SERGE, PETER, LYOF, MARK, and
general Court.]*

Julian. Gracious queen,
Take your throne first. Nothing befits you more
Than royalty and state: which wins you tribute
High in the very midmost of all pride:
For royalty is a touch that finds but few
Natured to swell to its glory. But, dear, you

Make splendour crazed to give you up its due.
You are too fair.

Tara. Surely you love me, Julian.
I am almost won to think it.

Julian. Tara, Tara!
I love you with a love that finds all states
Beggared beside your beauty. In your face
Kingdoms and functions reel to learn their pride
Lightly esteemed.

Tara. Not before you will I sit.
So let us sit together! I think we'll make
A royal and apt pair.

Julian. I think we will.
Honesty wins the tribute. [*They sit.*]
Now, my lords,
You know our business here. 'Tis to invest
Her majesty's brothers, and my excellent kinsmen,
With their new honours. But seeing I have heard
That some have bragged against it, let us forestall
All later violences of your speech. Speak out!
If any of you nurture guile, or bear
Mutinous brows about this palace of ours,
Speak out! You have my pledge, as man to man,
I'll hear you, with no prejudice nor anger.

Enter ANTONY.

Antony. Forgive my lateness, sir!

Julian. Come, Antony,

The Antony of my utter trust, do you lodge
Any complaint against the investiture
Of these my kinsmen and excellent gentlemen,
As notified by me?

Antony. Already, sir,
I have broken you my thoughts; and here and now
I say no more.

Julian. Why, that's a man! You, Lyof,
Have you your javelin of quick fault to cast?
If so, sir, cast it. If I am a king,
I am a man first, as I hope.

Lyof. Sire, no!
I am but a servant and a soldier here;
My thought lives in my sword.

Julian. Ah!—Sir, and you,
What is your thought?

Mark. I am a soldier too, sire:
I have no thought but in my sword.

Julian. Great Heaven!
Your swords are hidden, sirs; and their sharpness lies
Wrapt up in sheaths. What, is it so you wrap
Your muffled thoughts? Why, then, I think the jest
Has a shrewd flavour on the tongue of faith;
It is too curst and brackish. Gentlemen,
I would I knew where I could find me tongues
That lay not coucht in scabbards.

Antony. Sir, the hour
Wears on. The investiture awaits.

Julian. You are right.

Serge, I pronounce you here—I promulgate you
Even from this sitting, in letters free and patent,
And fit accessories—of the royal blood
A prince, next after us and our descendants.
Here is your parchment that embodies it,
And swells your revenues. Here's my hand.

Serge. My liege!

In God's name, I swear loyalty and thanks.

[*He kneels and kisses JULIAN'S hand.*]

Julian. You, Peter, have I linked my minister
Aiding good Antony here—

Peter. Oh, sire, forgive me!

May I speak with free tongue?

Julian. Say what you will.

Peter. Why, then I would not have this lofty gift

If so I slip away from that wide love

I long for most. I know the wealth of love

You give me; but I fear to break or ruin

The general amity.

Tara. Peter!—

To throw aside this kindness is to show

A stubborn and crookt spirit.

Julian. No; not so!

This is a man; and by his sturdy spirit

He educates my love. Look, gentlemen!

I love good speech: for such frank words as these

Are set about with jewelled honesty.

Come, will you take a joust with him:
 Some tourney to touch down his fluttering pennon
 Stuck in my love? The prize shall to him
 Who, here and now, shall bare his broad complaint
 And baulk the honour I intended so.
 What! no word! no plaint!
 Does love or fear blow off from your twitched mouths
 Their brimming plaints?—Look, Peter: take your
 scroll!

This silence is their love. Oh, more, far more:
 It is their honour pledged to aid and guard you,
 To tend you, serve you.

Peter. Sir, let me beg of you
 To keep it a week for further thought and counsel.
 I would not force it.

Julian. No, nor do you so.
 It's I that force it. Take it: take my hand
 And kiss me now that customary allegiance
 I think I shall not need.

Peter. With every breath
 I serve you, sire. For God and you and country
 I hold my life in a perpetual pawn.

[*He kneels and kisses JULIAN'S hand.*]

Julian. I am very sure of that.
 Well, Antony, is there further matter ripe
 For us to net now? Say it is not so:
 For all these tortuous trickeries snare my feet
 And irk my patience. Though what's to be done

Had best be done, and tost behind the arras.

Antony. There was but these two matters.

Julian.

Gentlemen,

We are dismissed. Go, sirs; for we shall wait.

[*They all go out save JULIAN and TARA.*]

Julian. Oh, my Tara!—

But why so dark and cold? What cloaks your brow
With these far chills and glooms? An icy breath
Has pushed between us.

Tara.

I—I am not cold.

Oh, no: nor am I strange.

Julian.

Tara, you are.

Whene'er my love wings to the flaming heights
Of richer hope, you pierce it with a shaft
Of formal courtesy. What have I done
That you should drape the fashion of my hope
With your displeasure? Sure, I think you women
Issue from different wombs than couch us men:
You have no natural heats.

Tara.

Julian, I'll go;

If to stay here is to hear you declaim
On all my sex.

Julian.

No, Tara, do not go!

If I spoke harshly I was much to blame.
Tell me: what have I done that mists should dim
The splendour of your face? Your smile can give
Expression to the inner thought of beauty.
Nature is prodigal with her delights:

Tara, can you not be?

Tara. I must think, Julian,
You are common and familiar with these men.
They ask a ruthless will, a mind that drives
Sheer thro' the angry menace of their rage
With purpose of defiance. This must break them;
This devastate the pitfalls that they set
To snare you in.

Julian. What: do you think grim men
Are all so easily broken? Tara, Cæsar
Showed ne'er his generalship so very apt
As when he met his enemies with gifts
And kindness. Openness has an eager trick
Touching the lyre in all men's hearts to song:
Tho' if occasion won me not to this,
I hope myself would bid me.

Tara. No, no, no.
You are wrong, and Time will prove it. Peter too,
See how he stumbled at your gift to-day!
It was a graceless deed.

Julian. I loved him for it.
Oh, Tara, you to me are high above
Occasion and mortal aid. Wisdom is pale
At everything you do: her stretching fingers
Can reach not to the regions you live in
And breathe the air of. Dear, but do not think
To stir foul deeps, and yet avoid the storm
Your hand wakes. It is this has made all men

Spill wide the purple stream of enmity
To reach us soon. 'Tis this—No, no, love, no,
Not tears! Forgive me for a tongue so shrewd,
Stumbling thro' bitter words!

Tara. Go, Julian, go!

Julian. Not go! I cannot go with you in tears;
It is impossible.

Tara. Yes; go, go, go!
You are grieved to have wed me: oh, I know you are:
Always I feared for it. I thought you full
Of perfect faith and nobleness.

Julian. Dear heart!
Why turn away? It catches closely at me,
And tears me thro'. You cannot doubt I love you.
Tara, Tara: see: I call high Heaven to witness,
All holiest things, and all things greatly prized,
That in the casual beacon of your eyes
Life's riddles are unsolved. My love, I am yours.
Forgive my clumsy stumbling!

Tara. No: you grieve
To have wed me. See: it pluckt from off your brows
The clustering bays of popularity.
It won you anger.

Julian. Did it? I am glad of it.
So is love proved: love is not love until
Thwarting and bitterness ring its quality out
On such a counter. And if with those proofs
I won you, then the prize out-topped the getting.

Tara. Julian, dear heart, how gracious you are to me!
 Forgive me if I doubt, for I have brought
 Much trouble to you. Look! your face is grieved.
 Let me kiss all your pain away, the pain I caused
 With fretfulness. Dear, let us go!

Julian.

My love!

[*They go out together.*]

SCENE 2.—BRABO'S *room in the Palace.* *Discovers*
 BRABO, MARK, and LYOF.

Brabo. So he is a royal prince! When yesterday
 We met, I thought him an archangel, sent
 As special emissary to this earth.
 For sure, he liked not its inhabitants,
 They being offensive to him, waving him
 A stench beside his nostril.

Lyof.

Yes, and the other

Refused the gift the king would robe him with!
 Refused it! It's like that we angle pike,
 Hoping to puff our pleasure out.

Mark.

No, no!

His was a natural diffidence of spirit.
 Brabo, this Peter, I think, leapt to the light
 From equal dark, but from a gentler womb
 Than those who call him brother found. His seemed
 The tentative way of nobleness, to my eye.

Lyof. Tentative fiddlesticks! They are all the same

These brothers and their sister. They and she
Are tangled in one piece, and should be burnt:
So! Yet they lack the snakish skill of ease
Coiling thro' her ambitions.

Mark. It may be.

Myself I love them not: not one of them,
Except perhaps this boy.

Brabo. My friends,

Business is urgent. Did you say Stephen was coming?

Lyof. He said so.

Brabo. Then he should be here by now.

It is already late. A soldier's pledge
Should be a hoop of steel.

Lyof. You should hear Stephen
Discourse on that. My Heaven, he thinks his whispers
Recorded in the gold-hasped book of doom;
And each punctilio of the thing he wills
Piped by an angel.

Brabo. And he is late. But then,
Stephen is indispensable to us.

He is our strategic centre: once gain him,
Then all the guard is ours; and the guard ours,
The crown will fall to us, like an autumn apple
In a privy orchard. Is that so?

Lyof. It is.

Brabo. God, then I'll give him patience, though he ask
Armfuls of it. If there are deeds to do,
The will to do them is the imperative duty,

Next how to do them. Stephen inverts the order,
And so we trip along the way we go
Thro' his fastidious thought. I surely think
He'd scent his hand before he'd take a dagger!
And every hour this harlot queen swells higher
And scorns us more.

Lyof. This last decree of the king's
Has touched him tho'.

Mark. Friend Brabo here would say
Stephen was part responsible for it,
Seeing that twice his hand has thrown away
The saving medicine.

Brabo. Yes; and so he is.
You like him, Lyof, for you serve with him;
And that's a tribute—

Lyof. Ah, I hear him coming.—
Brabo, we must agree to do it quickly,
As soon as—but here's Stephen!

Stephen. Gentlemen,
I have asked Antony to meet us here.

Brabo. Antony!

Stephen. Yes, Antony. He is toucht not less than we:
And he is a noble heart.

Brabo. It's as I said.
We will go talking till Heaven's trumpet blast
Shivers the curtained air. I think the angels
Will find us here, grey-haired and ague-limbed,
Discussing the rottenness of the state, and why

A harlot should be queen, or one of her brothers
The captain of her king's most excellent guard.

Stephen. What's this?

Brabo. Oh, it'll come, never fear!
Antony, you, and all of us must make way,
A new breed is on wing.

Stephen. By Heaven, it's not!
But here is Antony. I think we'll find him
As hot as any to right this present trouble,
And to find purges for its evil.

Enter ANTONY.

Brabo. Antony, sir,
With speech as true as any I greet you here;
But may I speak my mind?

Antony. Surely: why not?
I have not been bred to wince at open speech.
I love it, rather: Open words are rare,
And vouch an open spirit. But be open,
Brabo, my friend! Brag not of it, and then
Nurse half your thoughts.

Brabo. Oh, I'll be open enough;
And I'll be honest.—You see each man here?
Well, each has sunk his honour to the other
That what transpires in conclave of our meetings
We shall hold privy, and that all of us
Shall lift a common load. But you are not bound.

What pledge of you have we that all we say
You'll clamour to the queen?

Stephen. His honour, Brabo.

You are not bound to me: not one of you.
If you desire to stir a clamorous tongue,
In God's name do it; and may joy attend you.
I take no pledge, if honour's not a pledge
Sufficient in itself. But even so
Is Antony bound.

Antony. Stephen, Brabo is right.

We are not all like you. We lesser men
Need wordy and integral bonds to tie
The bundle on our faith. But there's no need;
For I have not come to join your secret conclaves:
Mine is a mission will seem strange to you,
But it is true, believe me. For the king
Desires to meet us, to discuss our wrongs
In open liberty.

Stephen. Why, he is a man.

More of a man that once I thought he was.
But this is true, Antony?

Antony. I have said it is.

Stephen. Your pardon!—

This rights us all, I think. Our first demand
Was that, even as of old, he should convene
A consultation of us all; that thus,
Were he but honest, as I think he is,
Our pothers should be seen, and so dismissed.

Brabo. Maybe, and maybe not. Sir, can you say
Will he unmarried?

Antony. Well, scarcely that, I think.
That is a test yourself would boggle at,
Being once bewitched in love. But come now, Brabo,
Who, being a man, would meekly drop his wife
Because his friends misliked her private manners?
You are intractable.

Brabo. And yet it's all.
Pluck out the head of a sore, and health succeeds.
But leave it, and however you may cleanse
The fester of your wound, its first prime cause
Will baffle health, and break you out again
A new corruption.

Antony. Yet you'll meet him, Brabo?

Brabo. Oh, ay, I'll meet him. I am inured to words.
I think I find a curious pleasure in them.
I'll meet him. Words are like a gossamer web,
Sprinkled with dewy lustres and behung
High o'er a hedge, from branch to swaying branch,
Glittering before the golden peep of day:
A sight to wake up early morns to see.
Oh, yes, I'll meet him.

Antony. Come, that's half the battle.
The speedy issue of it all next lies
In our own hands. I'll go apprise the king;
And having once arranged the punctual hour
I'll send you word of it.

Stephen. I'll go with you.

I fear friend Brabo here is overtetchy:
But being once cooled, his anger will soon turn
To sunny bounty. So I'll come with you.

[ANTONY and STEPHEN go out together.]

Brabo. Lyof, you wished a task to prove your zeal:
Do you still wish it?

Lyof. If you have one to give,
And if it's necessary in the teeth
Of what the king has said.

Brabo. Mind not the king.
Or rather, mind them not that fool the king,
That warp his judgment. Look: this is your task.
On Stephen hangs all else; he is our pivot:
So seeing he is so quickly won aside
From steady doing, we must find him pricks
To get a fury in him. Now your task
Is to do this.

Lyof. Mine? Brabo, tell me how.
For, in all truth, this Stephen with his heats
Baffles all efforts.

Brabo. Oh, with such a man
Never resist him; urge him from behind.
Why, Lyof, if you but spun thro' his thought
Wild tales—improbable, if you will; untrue,
What matters it? so it but gain our end,
Which is an excellent end—what then would happen?
Suppose you dropt him but a hint or two,

That this hot queen desired her brother Serge
To fend her loving husband; and to this
Angled it so that Stephen and all his troop
Owed chieftainship to him. Put it yourself
As one most nearly toucht, as loving him,
And fearing other authorities! Faith, high Heaven
Would not beat down his wrath. Or that the queen
Had spoken ill of his accoutrements,
His soldier bearing. Come, a thousand tricks
There are, all full of subtlety, and each
Sufficient to make Stephen flame with fury.

Lyof. So there may be. But, Brabo, I will not
Harass hot Stephen with a thing untrue.

Brabo. Our cause is true: in that all articles melt,
And we must serve it. What! have you been won
By the lascivious glances of our queen,
Or by her brothers?

Lyof. No, by Heaven, I have not.

Brabo. Then do you think they mean friend Stephen
well?

Lyof. No, I do not.

Brabo. Why, then you speak but truth
In warning Stephen of it.

Mark. Lyof, Lyof,
You'll have to give in, man; so give in now.
Besides, our unity is all.

Lyof. I'll wake him.
But, Brabo, in my own way, and not yours.

Brabo. However you do it, do it! Chafe his anger,
 Until it breaks the temper of his mind
 And flames in furious devastation high
 About the country. Do it: chafe his anger,
 And to that, chafe his pride. Well now, good-night!

Lyof. Good-night! [LYOF goes out.

Brabo. They are puppets, all of them.
 They want a mind to urge them to sure ends,
 A mind that swerves not.

Mark. I suppose I am
 A puppet too. What, Brabo? What, old friend?

Brabo. Why, so you are, old Mark! Good, silent
 Mark!

But yet you are the very best of them:
 You do your deeds, and prattle not about them.
 But, come! Let's go and have a flagon of wine!
 [They go out together.

ACT II

SCENE I.—TARA'S room, with balcony beyond. Discovers TARA and CATHNA.

Tara. But tell me, Cathna, what he said. My dear,
I am not so young that any rumour of ill
Will quail me. I have a king, my gentle Cathna,
That's apt and eager to my wooing kiss.
Power and function meet in him; and he
Will bulwark us.

Cathna. But they stop not their aim,
Even tho' it be at him.

Tara. At him? My dear,
You dream. Or has this lover-spy of yours
Scattered his tale with spice and plums to win
More kisses from your lips?

Cathna. Maybe
'Twas so, madam; and maybe not so, madam.

Tara. How! angry, Cathna? Dear, sweet, foolish
Cathna,

You must not pout. Men do not like those women
That pout: so if you must be angry, girl,
Then be disdainful, cold, and chill. Come now,
Tell me, what did he say?

Cathna. He said—he said—

Oh, he told lies for kisses!

Tara.

What, still angry!

See: I'll distribute those dark mists myself.—

Ah ha! the sun breaks thro' the lacing clouds

That dim its glory, and all heaven again

Is clothed in sunshine. Now, my Cathna, tell me

All of the tale you heard.

Cathna.

Why then, he said

That Brabo, Lyof, Mark, and Stephen had met

Swearing upon their sword-hilts that from now

Within three months they will drag down from high

Their highnesses your brothers, or band faith

To lead a revolution.

Tara.

Peter and Serge!

Well, they are most wise in that. How it approves

My wisdom, too, in making them my guard,

In choosing them to harness me about.

No, no! they will not have them, for with them

My new nobility rises to the heavens,

And builds itself. They are my splendid line

Of mighty princelings; and to strike at me

Will ruin the state and break it. But tell me,

Was Antony ever with him?

Cathna.

He said so,

And took a pledge with Brabo.

Tara.

Antony!

Antony too! Oh, I'll tell Julian this.

Girl, here's my necklet of the rarest pearls,

And here's my bracelet that the king kissed on
Before he gave it me. For such a news
I would exchange the moon.

Cathna. I thank you, madam.

Tara. No more this Antony stands 'twixt me and that
Most absolute realm that haunts my very dreams
And teases all my days. I know not why,
But, Cathna, the king loves him absolutely,
Devolving government on him, and I hate him,
I hate the thought of him.—Well, what is it?

Enter a servant.

Servant. Your majesty, a man below awaits you;
And, being denied, refuses to accept
Denial.

Tara. So: a man awaits me?

Servant. Yes.

Tara. And will not take refusal?

Servant. That is so.

Tara. Why, then, I will not see him, even because
His mood is imperative.

Servant. He bad me give you
This twisted ring in token of his presence:
Saying that when you saw it you would know
Who it was that sought you.

[He hands the queen a ring.]

Tara. Oh, my God!

What, he! he! Cathna, oh, Cathna!

Cathna. Madam, what's this
Has broken on you; and banished colour and bloom
Out of your cheeks? But what a curious ring
It is he brought you!

Tara (starting towards the servant). Will you stand and
stand

Gaping there like a loon? I'll teach you then
To make a stock of troubles.

[She strikes him fiercely and repeatedly.]

Cathna (pushing him out). See, get out!

Wait for awhile without, until I bring
Your message to you. Go, sir!

[She thrusts him out and returns to the queen.]

Madam, madam,

What is it? Tell me, for I am linked with you,
And my fate's twined with yours.

Tara. I am well now.

It was a sudden sickness: when a girl
It often came on me, and dazed my mind
With sudden dreams. Go, tell that boy what 'twas;
And tell him, too, I'll see the stranger here—
Alone; yes, Cathna, none but he and I.
Alone. He knew my father once. Now go;
Go quickly!

[CATHNA goes out slowly.]

Oh, when all my trembling dreams
Had nearly found success! like a wild doom
In sulphurous valleys, whelming ease and beauty
To glut its cruel maw. Oh, curse him then!

Why should he snatch my cup away from me,
Just when it gleams with purple of my hopes
Pressed from my enemies? Curse him! No, no, no!
I must be calm, or I shall lose myself
The uplands of advantage.

Enter HAGEN.

Hagen. Tara, I greet you.—

You do not seem too pleased to see me, Tara.

Tara. I think you must be stranger in this country:

I am a queen.

Hagen. Oh, pardon, your majesty!

Yet I have memories of remoter times

When only such soft sovranly clothed you over

As my good sword could earn: tho' even then

'Twas something lightlier prized by you, I think,

Than hardly won by me.

Tara. Why are you here?

Why do you trouble me? Of older times

I have distant memories, and I have forgotten

The closer details.

Hagen. I have not forgotten.

Tara. But you forget that at a thought from me

Many would rise, and from this happy sun

Hide you for ever. I have authority;

And there are many find their offices

Dependent on me. Would you trouble me

Knowing all this?

Hagen. Knowing it? Oh, yes, Tara!

For I know, too, that brief perfunctory papers,
Sufficient in the things they might reveal
To wreck your dizzy station, lie in the care
Of one who loves you little, as I think.

By some strange chance

Your wit may teach you what these papers are,
And teach you, too, with what a count to value
The deep habitual function of my breath.

Tara. Hagen! Oh, Hagen!—Quickly tell me who—
Who holds these papers?

Hagen. A most noble gentleman.

And if I erred not as he told it me

His name was Stephen.—What! Have I then touched
you?

Why do you start and fear?

Tara. Hagen, are you the man

Whom I once thought all nobleness and honour?

Whom to make angry most were to attain him

With cruelty to me? Surely have the years

Been most unkind to you; tho' more to me

In breaking in my mind that perfect picture

It framed of you.

Hagen. Tara, I am that man.

And as I loved you then, I love you now,

With all that bitterness adds, in snatching out

At whimsy fancies. From the day you fled me

I have not known felicity or joy,
No day in which like fever in my bones—

Tara. You countenanced it.

Hagen.

I would not now.

Tara.

My Hagen,

You were most kind to me. I was a child
When first I came to you. A wild, wild dream
Merited brief conclusion, having no bonds
To harness drudgeries for a later hour.
See, Hagen, in a noble and high mood
You dealt with my vagary, and since then
In all my hours of dream you have seemed to me
Knightly and royal. In this common earth
It is not well to have ideals of men.

Hagen. No, Tara, no! I have not come to taunt you.

'Tis true that oft regret has whipped my mind
To think I free'd you, opened my arms wide
To let you flutter out and find new loves.
Well, that is over; the years have spun that in
With its wide woof, as in a tapestry tale.
I come on different business.

Tara.

Oh!

What is it? Tell me quickly, for my time
Is all too busy.

Hagen.

Pardon! It's my mood

Not to let urgency break up my pace.
Tara, from that dark, bitter, bitter day
You preened your wings, and took your flight from me,

I have wandered in rough soldiership: but now
Need has o'ertaken me. I am straitly hedged
By tedious circumstance. Yet Illyricum
Has a wide army, and you are queen of it:
Which is a juncture that must serve my turn,
For memory's sake.

Tara. I cannot find you service.

Hagen. I cannot hold my papers.

Tara. But I'll do it.

It gives me pleasure to dispense large bounties.
Yet if I do it, deed for deed must match,
And I must have those papers.

Hagen. You shall have them.

But in their place I must demand from you
Security of tenure in my office:
No brief thing snatched from me when circumstance
Flows once more smoothly, will now serve my turn,
Nor ease the settled humour of my mood.

Tara. You shall be satisfied. Before a week
Spins through its circuit I shall send for you,
When, if you bring your papers with you, I
Will you give mine. Now go!

Hagen. Oh, ere I go
I'll put a kiss on those lips that have known
So many prest from me.

Tara. No. Hagen, no!
Hold off! I am a queen. Would you risk all
For just a gusty whim?

Hagen. Then on your hands!
Tara, on these soft hands that have caressed
So often o'er my face.

Tara. Remind me not
Of those dark days! Yet kissing on the hands—
Why, 'tis a royal office. Here they are!
Are they not fairer than are dainty shells
Veined with the hue of those that dwelt in them,
And softer than the down picked from the bosom
Of nestling doves?

Hagen. You madden me, Tara; cease!

Tara. Come, kiss, and go!

[HAGEN kisses TARA'S hands; and as he does so,
JULIAN, accompanied by ANTONY, enters. They
survey the scene a moment.]

Julian. Oh, Heaven! Oh, what's this?
Antony, see to this man. Mount guard on him—
Go, go; for God's sake!

Antony. You, sir, come with me.
We shall not fail in courtesy;
But for the present we must walk together.

[ANTONY goes out with HAGEN.]

Julian. Madam,
This bursts all explanations. Do you think
That even where I prest all my treasure down
Security failed me! Is it not enough—
Answer me, madam! Is it not enough
That in this kingly business I am alone

In friendless isolation; where I need
 Love, that black hate and hideous treason eye
 And gape on me, thinking to pluck down with me
 The sovranity with which I deckt your brow?
 Is it not enough, I say, to lose so much
 Without your fault? Dear faith, and must I pay
 My kingdom for one jewel that I'd have,
 Yet lose the jewel too?

Tara. My lord, I think—

Julian. None of these studied graces! Who is this man?
 Why with the foul contagion of his breath
 Presses he hottest kisses on the hands
 I won for my sole pleasure? Hell and heaven!
 I'll have him scourged. Where do you go?

Tara. To stay
 Is to hear words reflection will grieve at.

Julian. Have I not cause for anger? Here I come
 Touching the state, thinking that loyalty's due
 Even to the queen my love had won for me
 Demanded I should toss and interchange
 High business with her, and what meets my gaze
 Is a hot stranger planting reeking kisses
 Where I thought myself king. Oh, Tara, Tara!
 Answer me; do not weep!

Tara. Is this the man
 Who claimed the pomp of angels down to witness
 The perfect love and faith he drest me in?
 This, he, who awaked a thousand echoing oaths

To account my virtues? Who surrounded me
With lustres raying from his perfect faith?
It is all over. Faith is snuffed and blown,
And in this darkness—

Julian. Tara!

Tara. Touch me not!
Must I be touched by hands that think my flesh
Tainted by light caresses?

Julian. Yet forgive me
If I spoke over harshly, and bid me know
Who was it lately dazed me, whom I saw
Plucking his hungry kisses on your hands?
What name had he?

Tara. And shall I answer you
In proof of innocence? Is it come to this?
Must I give answer in that tribunal
Where lately I was queen?

Julian. I will absolve you.
Yet because that sight
Sent angry tempests raging thro' my soul,
In pity of the pain that shook me thro'
At the strange spectacle, who was he, Tara?

Tara. A soldier, sir.

Julian. Who, who? How came he here?

Tara. One who came here to thank me for the love
I won among the lower common people.
But if he spoke me true words or false words
I know not, for he mixt even with his praise

Crafty petitions for a place in the army,
Which I, being stricken with his pleasing guile,
Promised him in your name.

Julian. And he shall have it.
But is this all? Why did he press such heat
Of kisses on your hands?

Tara. In thanks for it.
Was it not queenly that I should give him
This fragile hand to put his loyalty on?

Julian. Most queenly. Oh, my Tara!

Tara. But, my lord,
You have my suppliant prisoner.

Julian. I'll go free him,
And come again to you.

Tara. And probe him for my truth!
Doubt like a raven sways his ebon plumage
In the tost branches of your mind. I see it:
You go to pair my tale. Why yesterday
I was immaculate.

Julian. You do me wrong.
When do you see him next? When does he come
For your appointment with him? for till then
I will leave over all things.

Tara. Dearest, to-morrow
He will be here: to-morrow you with me
Must see him, to dower him with what you will.

Julian. Dear love, forgive me for my words of anger.
Black jealousy, unlovely as it is,

Is yet conceived of love. I'll straightway free him.

[Exit JULIAN.]

Tara. Dear love, I think indeed men are as hemp
Spun o'er the fingers, and by craft of women
Bent to what shape we will. They are clay, and we
The potters; or they are marble, giving us
Labour and thought to hew our shape in them.
Coming to us, they sue us and beseech us
To work the virtue of our artistry
Upon them.—Cathna!—Oh, she has missed the final
And perfect joy who has not found this out.
Cathna!

Enter CATHNA.

Cathna. Madam.

Tara. I have a message for you, that must be
Delivered quickly, secretly, and surely.
Come here with me while I unwind it to you.

[*Exeunt both to balcony.*]

SCENE 2.—*Throne Room in Palace. Discovers JULIAN
and ANTONY walking together.*

Julian. No, no, the past is past. Not one of us
Would have the follies of our hot-blood youth
Dug up for our deliberate eyes to greet.
It seems she once was irresponsible,
And heady too. So let it lie. I hope

Soon to forget it.

Antony. Yet her majesty
Hath enemies, sir, whose natures are not schooled
To quick forgetfulness.

Julian. What do they know?
They do not know, nor can they know, of this.

Antony. I think their nimble thoughts have winged the
air

To some good purpose in the flight for knowledge.
There's one at least has struck it where it lies
The yonder side the mark.

Julian. Do you mean Stephen?

Antony. Ay, it was Stephen I thought of.

Julian. Antony,
The thing has grown too grievous for dismissal.
Majesty irks me, as you know; I'd be
A man as you are, friend, though fashioned, shaped,
And hewn out for myself and by myself,
Yet I must call my kingship to my aid,
For they outnumber me. Shall I not choose,
Who yet am king, what kind of bride I will?
Shall I give over my bed-fellow to the choice
Of stranger minds?—some pale and bloodless girl
Of foreign royalty, chosen by specious policy!

Antony. It is not that that galls them to their hate.
'Tis rather the high elevation found
For Peter and Serge.

Julian. But whom have I pluckt down

To set these up? Was that injustice mine?

In linking one with you—

Antony.

See, here they come!

By all my love for you, sir, note especially

Brabo, the colonel of your horse.

Enter STEPHEN, BRABO, MARK, LYOF, and a few others.

Julian.

Sirs, welcome all!

I am your king, I know;

But let me waive my royalty and my office.

You are such subjects, friends, and sturdy soldiers

As kings may wish for. Waive it, gentlemen;

Let us be men together. Who is your spokesman?

Brabo. Count Stephen, sir. His lineage and his gifts,

With the hot sympathies he has with us,

Entitle him to bear from us to you

The moody business of our care.

Julian.

Ah, Stephen!

I think I need not bid him to let free

His sudden candour. But I will with him

Conspire against myself in hope of peace.

Can I say more? I have no other hope

Than to steer all of us to those quiet sounds

Where honour rides. I cannot do it, Stephen,

If you are recalcitrant.

Stephen.

I would not be.

Our trouble is too delicate to require

Explicit cogitation; but its matter

Already has flown out before the sun.
See, sir, how it has broken us from that love
That once was all your own!

Julian. But what is it?

Can you not tell it me?

Stephen. How can I do it?

Julian. It touches, then, our queen?

Stephen. Oh, more than that.

She who should be the jewel of all eyes
Is tost upon the common people's tongue—

Antony. Stephen!

Stephen. I cannot say it. Enough of that!
That breaks a theme where thoughts may rather tread
Than tongues may follow. It more cuts at us
To see our old nobility soiled.

Julian. Indeed!

So having thrust your question at my wish
Myself to choose my bed-fellow, you add
Disinterested criticism of me
Because I dare to open veins i' the state
To flush with newer blood! Stephen, I hope
The manner of my raiment and my gait
Win your approval.

Brabo. May I speak, sir, now?

Julian. Speak, speak!

Brabo. Surely we make criss-cross a simple texture!
Experience and the records of all time
Prove that hot irritation ravel more

What is already twisted. So my word is this,
Let us that bear hot minds and troubled blood
Meet with their highnesses your majesty's brothers:
Meet here and now: it may be possibly,
Even like a python's slough, these heady heats
Will be discarded in the sun of amity,
Speaking together in a mutual love.

Julian. This is a manly word.—What is it, Antony?
Do you not like it then?

Antony. I do not like it.

Brabo. Yet why, my lord? Cannot dark disaffection
Be won away by honesty?

Julian. Surely, Antony,
The proposition's good.

Antony. I do not like it.

Contrary heats consort ill with each other.

Brabo. Is not the cautious Antony somewhat too
gloomy?

His faith in human goodness does not light
A sorrowing earth.

Julian. Stephen, what do you say?
At such a meeting would you labour for
A common union?

Stephen. Yes, I think I would.
For what I lack in love to them, believe me,
Is but a little in that larger bulk
I owe you, sir.

Julian. And I am glad to know it.

'Tis in that very love I have my faith.
(To BRABO.) And will you meet fair honesty with
honesty?

Brabo. Sir, I am over-honest.

I own, it fits not well my fiercer moods
To take my cap in hand and bend the knee.
But an extended hand calls me the churl
If I put mine not in it.

Julian. Antony,
What think you now?

Antony. I am still averse to it.

Julian. It seems I must o'er-rule your counsel then,
Though I o'er-rule it sadly. Do you go,
And coming, come again with Peter and Serge
At my behest, and as you come, acquaint them
To reconciliation.

[Exit ANTONY.]

Sirs, though I am king
I know the limitations governing
The order of kingship. I can bid you serve
With loyalty, but I cannot force your love.
Yet it is that remoter, higher kingdom
That I would own. Therefore I strip from me
Prerogative and privilege and office,
Seeing they raise impertinent brows across
Our mutual path. Yet since they cling to me
I will absent me from your conclave here,
In order that your accord may be free
And unconstrained. I beg you, therefore, friends,

Stint not your proper half. [Exit JULIAN.

Stephen. This is the end.

We must seal peace. Our king is such a man
As wakes the ultimate gentleness in me;
And 'tis for that I love him. Look you, Brabo,
I would embrace the grave if by that means
I could protect him.

Brabo. There's no fault with the king:
But what of the queen?

Lyof. And what of her two brothers?

Brabo. Ay, her two brothers! Stephen, they have one
aim,

One end, one expectation, and one hope,
One final glorious climax.

Stephen. Oh! and that is?

Brabo. Antony, you, myself, and all of us—
Excepting their own puking sycophants—
Swept by the urgent hurricane of their hate
To one disaster.

Lyof. Hist! I hear them coming.

Stephen. We must compose ourselves to parley with
them:

If they approve of parley.

Enter ANTONY with SERGE and PETER.

Brabo. Stephen, may I
Usurp your leadership with one short word?

Stephen. Surely! There's here no stiff priority;
At least, not at my wish.

Brabo. Why, that's the thing
I wished myself to say. For when the king
Left us awhile, he said we should forego
All rank and pride, all privilege and distance.
It is assumed that we all here are equal,
Having no precedence, whether as soldiers,
Nobles, or brothers to the king, communal
And pure-fraternal.

Serge. What!

Antony. No, no! not so!
'Tis not a necessary postulate, that,
To amity and peace.

Peter. Sirs, for my part,
Believe me, I have only hopes for peace;
And will observe whatever terms you raise,
Saving my proper manhood.

Serge. Then do so:
But do not speak for me. There are distinctions
Of rank and pride, of privilege and distance,
I cannot choose to waive: they are myself,
Essential to myself, even as the lack of them
Constitutes other men. I will not doff them.

Mark. Objection number one.

Brabo. Ay, Mark, that's so.
Perhaps our friend will first explain to us
In what degree he is more noble or high

Than, say, Count Stephen here?

Antony. God whelm you all!

'Tis as I said: we are tricked. (*To SERGE.*) Heed not
the question

It is unnecessary.

Stephen. Not so, by Heaven!

'Tis not unnecessary. I'll have an answer.

Serge, Captain Serge, Prince Serge, whatever you are,

In what degree are you more noble than I

That you refuse a common platform with me?

It is a proper question.

Antony. Stephen, Stephen!

Why will you ride on stilts of precedence

When all our welfare trembles on the edge

Of black disaster?

Stephen. Oh, I know, my friend,

You are a saint from heaven. But I am not;

Nor do I wish to be.—Come, sir, your answer!

What is the virtue makes you more enskied

Than I am?

Antony. Stephen, you are being beguiled, beguiled.

Stephen. Come, Antony, aside! Your answer, sir!

Antony. For God's sake, Serge, speak wisely, for he is
hot.

Serge. What! and show fearfulness!

Antony. 'Tis as I thought,

We have been tricked to this.

Stephen. Your answer, sir!

Serge. Why, then, my answer's this: I date my rank
From royalty; and I therefore lead in precedence
The commonalty, you being one of them.

Peter. Serge, Serge, be wise!

[illegible]

Sir, and once more!

I date my rank from puissance, for my power
Rules you through constituted craft of kingship,
My word being in its ear.

Stephen. Do you hear that?

But look: I will be calm. Your every date
Floats from your sister, as from a fountain head
Of every excellent gift: is that not so?

Serge. Well, what of it?

Stephen. A fig then for your rank!
Its very fount's defiled.

Serge. What's this you say?

Stephen. I say it again: its very fount's defiled.
Your rank and pride, your privilege and distance,
Your precedence—pah! it's a strumpet's brood;
And I can prove that every word I say
Is winged by golden truth.

Antony. Oh, Stephen, Stephen,
Where will this end? (*To BRABO.*) Well, are you
satisfied?

Peter. Do you insult the queen?

Stephen. If to speak truth

Is to insult, why then I think I do.
Yet not with her, nor you, have I my quarrels,
But with that coxcomb who finds all the earth
Dust at his feet. Prince Serge, what is your answer?
Have you a sword, or will you whimper and cringe
At sister's petticoats?

Serge. Is it to this
You all have bid me come? To this—to hear
Insults that stick not only in my side,
But vilify the queen!—Sir, as for you,
I scorn you and despise you.

Stephen. As I thought.
But it's too often heard on cowards' tongues
For it to grieve me now.

Antony. Stephen, for my sake
I beg you mend this breach.

Peter. For all our sakes,
But chiefly for the throne's stability,
On which your safety hangs, Serge, do the same.

Serge. Peter, you take too much upon yourself.
No! I have nothing to say.

Stephen. Come, Antony!
Yourself have set up royalty for a model:
How can I better that? This is a prince
Of all immaculate courtesy.

Serge. I'll not stay
To be insulted so.

Stephen. Well, well, my friend,

You know well where to find me. Lyof, come;
Let's to our duties, even as soldiers should
When irked by coxcombs.

*[Exeunt STEPHEN and LYOF one way, and SERGE
another.]*

Antony. Brabo, you have won:
Or, it may be, you have lost: I do not know.
Yet this I know, if there was ever crime
Committed in the earth's red histories,
Or hateful iniquity that hid its head
From the glad light of the sun, then this is it.
The country will yet shudder for it, and quiver
As at a hideous blow. Still, I must save it
As best I may. You, Peter, come with me.

*[Exeunt ANTONY with PETER, while the rest trail out
after them, leaving BRABO and MARK together.]*

Brabo. Well, Mark, old friend, what think you?

Mark. Heavens me, Brabo!
It fell out pat, as though you were their god
Directing and controlling.

Brabo. So I was.
If reading the one medicine for the state
Fearlessly, and with equal wilfulness
Compounding it for all to drink and live
Be godship, then I have godship.

Mark. And the medicine?

Brabo. Well, that demands a beaker of red wine.

[Exeunt together.]

SCENE 3.—TARA'S Room. Discovers SERGE, TARA, and CATHNA.

Serge. But not alone did he strike scorn at me,
He scoffed at you—

Tara. Oh dear! Oh dear! Why, Serge,
You come to me as though I were your guardian
And you my natural infant and strict charge.
You have your hands to strike with, you have a sword
To take its instant travel in the air
Hearing calumny. Oh, I wish I were
A man, and not a woman taking thought
To work her energy through men.

Serge. Natural infant!
Come, Tara, you are waggish. Natural infants
Issue from natural mothers.

Tara. You weary me.

Serge. Believe me I am not here for my pleasure:
You weary me.—Come, Tara, recognise
I am your brother. All these airs and graces,
That noose you others in a difficult web,
Are lost on me. A brother stands before you
Unsexed in that relationship.

Tara (to CATHNA). Go watch
At the far outer door. When the king comes
Then let me know. [Exit CATHNA.

Will you to my maid's face

Address me so? Serge, I am amazed at you.
Serge. Then for heaven's sake let us have done with
 graces.

Tara. Did I not give you power?

Serge. In which good power
 I am well content to stand without your aid.

Tara. Then go out from me! You offend my sight
 As you stand there before me with that smile
 Of curled complacency. Go! Go!

Serge. And doff
 My cap to Stephen, even as Peter did?

Tara. Oh, Peter, Peter! How I hate that boy!
 For all my plans and craft, the pains I take,
 His tender pusillanimity o'er-rides
 To post to our foes.—Well, what did Stephen call me?

Serge. Oh, such a name as they who win it most
 Dislike it most; while they who earn it not,
 Bearing an unsmirched honesty about
 Before all men, will not believe it possible
 That such things can be.

Tara. And so you too think
 Ill things of me! But do not think them, Serge:
 I am your sister.

Serge. When do you see the king?

Tara. Yet by that word he has cast his javelin taunt
 Against the honour of the throne itself,
 And that is war: he has lit the beacon fires
 To startle all the land with bloody meaning,

Speaking that word, unless the king expel him,
Which he is sure to do, if only now
To save the general conflagration so.
We have them, Serge, twisted and broken. Say,
How did grave Antony act?

Serge. He with his hope
To find the stricter balance of all hearts
Was only grieved. I understand him not;
Nor do I wish to understand him either;
I know he is not with us.

Tara. Why, he must go!
He is grave, but he must go; for till he do
The throne is but half ours, who hope to be
Indisputable monarchs on that seat—

Serge. But what of Julian, Tara?
He'll not unfrock his Antony, while to ask him
Will be to court denial, and so baulk
Our further power.

Tara. Oh, do not fret for me.
Julian's my organ intricate, singing out
My music to the world, though it requires
Skill to discourse on him. I think I have found
His master note.

Enter CATHNA.

Cathna. Madam, the king is here;
And with him Antony.

Tara. Not that way, Serge!

Come this way. Look! I'll come with you myself.

Cathna, stay here awhile, and say I sleep.

[Exeunt hastily TARA and SERGE. CATHNA goes singing over toward the further balcony; and as she does so, JULIAN and ANTONY enter together]

Julian. What's this! I thought I heard

Voices. Did you not, Antony, hear voices?

Cathna. Your majesty, 'twas only I that sang
About my work.

Julian. Well, it is good to hear
That some can find such gaiety. But go,
And tell the queen I wait.

Cathna. She is asleep:
And I'll go wake her. *[Exit CATHNA.]*

Julian. How I wish I knew
The way to strip this heavy perplexity
Like a worn garment from about my limbs.
I would have done with kingship and my heritage
For the bright gaiety of my youth again.
Antony, friend, for me there is no evil
I could not face, but to be plunged this way
Into a darkness with no way out to it
That I can find, and where my every step
Is to tread on the honour I love best,
To me 'tis hell. Can you not think some way
That leads back to the sun?

Antony. I thought I knew
Once: but not now. I find my only refuge

In being grim.

Julian. If I'd to meet my death,
I think I'd do it bravely and happily.
But to unravel these hard twisted knots,
To do it with such skill that our brave country
May not be torn with bloody wounds—
Antony, it staggers me!

Antony. There are some would say
Disown these brave new kinsmen you have got.

Julian. But would you have me do it?

Antony. Maybe not.

Julian. No, nor would any man in whose good blood
There was the touch of health. Shall I not stand
Erect and free, to choose me where I will
My love's regard? I think sometimes, my friend,
The man that would serve honour on this earth
Will find it but a tangled net to trip
His way-going feet. A good assassin's knife
Would save me all this broil.

Antony. And yet, believe me,
If I gave you my counsel for the time,
You would not follow it.

Julian. For I know it well.
You would have me banish Brabo and quit Stephen;
Banish a man at whose iniquitous door
I have no charge to lay, and quit a man
Whose mouth has spewed a filthy and vile shame
At her I love. It spoils the use of reason,

And violates justice.

Antony. It's more deep than justice,
It is solution. It goes higher than reason,
Being the very fount whence reason comes:
It's sanity.

Julian. And so is the assassin's knife.
But I'll do neither; for they'd wreck my soul
And devastate the uses of my life.
What other counsel have you?

Antony. Banish Stephen,
And gather all your forces.

Julian. Is it so deep?

Antony. Deeper than that; Brabo has all the army
In bit and halter. The grave-headed trust him;
The hotter-hearted follow Stephen, who is
His tool, although he does not see it,
Thinking himself propelled by purest honour.

Julian. Honour! Honour's a jade that tricks us all—
Though that's an ancient thing to say. Look you,
'Tis my fastidious honour blinds me now,
When but a sword's-stroke would accomplish me
The gain of sudden darkness for my foes,
And a bright lustre shining round my feet
To guide my way. Why is it, Antony,
When we would e'en play truly to our best
Light is denied us?

Antony. It's the very reason
I say, there is but grimness left us now:

Grimness and preparation.—Here is the queen!
Shall I, sir, go?

Enter TARA.

Julian. By no means. You stay here.
Tara!

Tara. My king and my dear husband!
See what a grief I am to you! What sorrow
And trouble I have brought you with my love!
Are you not sorry that you loved me, dearest?
Or are you still that kingly heart that takes
Occasion of disaster for love's proof?

Julian. If grief be grief
Then by that token love is also love.
And so I love you. Even to touch your lips
Discounts the weightiest of perplexity,
Making the wide earth wondrous. Did you tie
Anxiety up, until you thereby made
Intricacy intricate twice so much,
I am still your debtor.—Look, there's Antony
Irked by our music. He is no soft lover;
But waits to push the tedious wheel of statecraft.

Tara. Julian!

Julian. Dear love!

Tara. Are not we two enough
To push that tedious wheel? We cannot be
So open of our business if an ear
Unsympathetic hover near our presence.

Julian. My queen, you are the very eye of beauty:
Your place is in the rituals of the earth,
And I am proud of you. But our good friend,
Stout Antony here, he is incarnate wisdom,
Gleaned in a hoar experience.

Tara. Then, your majesty,
You did not well to ask me to come here;
For I am foolish.

Julian. Do not go too far.
I have no other thought, as you know well,
Than to deal tenderly with you, with the use
Women require of man, not to speak now
Of Love's high services. But to pout here,
To disagree at such a difficult hour,
Is something short of wisdom.

Antony. Let me go!

Julian. I will not, Antony: you shall stay here,
And we shall speak together. (*To TARA.*) Where do
you go?

Tara. My word's not wanted here: nor would I break
Your secret conference.

Julian. To my wife and queen
I would not use harsh edicts: nevertheless,
You must remain. First, Tara, tell me this,
Has Serge yet broken his case to you?

Tara. He has.

Julian. Ah! And he said?

Tara. How can I tell you that?

Only that he amazed my startled ear.
Nor did I think, of all men, Julian, you
Would have me violate such difficult things
Strangers being by.

Julian. No, no; enough of that!
I am not to be brooked. A little more,
And all these petulant devils in my blood
That tear my brain will be unleashed in anger.
I am a little overwrought. Tell me,
Did he confess to you his share of blame
In bringing anger out of Stephen?

Tara. Blame!
His share of blame?

Julian. I said so, share of blame.
The heat of bitter words, as you must know,
Is not a thing that burns up in calm moods:
So they that wake the anger have a share
In what they wake, nor may exculpate be
In what flows after.

Tara. So, being finical,
You'd yoke my brother in this heat of words!
Ah, Julian! that dear love of yours that once
Urged itself on to lovelier services,
Has paled from wonder.

Julian. All myself has paled!
I am myself o'erwrought; for through my nerves
Ride resident fiends that pluck this way and that,
Till I can scarce withhold my beating brain

From most regrettable and causeless angers.
 Yet in this business is an equity
 That I must find; and so I must be calm.
 Now 'tis apparent he was stung to this—
 Stephen I mean—
 He is quickly angry though I vow he is true:
 I trust my instinct in him. So for Serge—
 Put him aside, and what's the trouble then?
 If Stephen admit his words, I'll have with him,
 I'll banish him. But if he should deny them—
 The thing is at an end.

Tara. Perhaps the whip
 Is somewhat rustic; but if it were not so,
 I'd make it leap upon him with these hands,
 And love to do it. In default of that,
 Banishment is a weapon that protects
 The hand that wields it. All these sickly upstarts
 That look too high should be given other service
 In other lands, for we should build a state
 New-fashioned by our own hands for ourselves.

Julian. But what if such an action brought on us
 Hatred, the strife of states, and shedding of blood?
 Oh, I am sick and weary of it!

Antony. Madam,
 It is too true the army is disaffected.
 Even to touch Stephen will arouse it; yet
 His angry words have hurt him. But this thing
 Would write a red rebellion o'er the land.

Tara. Who is it says so?

Antony. 'Tis undoubtedly so.

Tara. Julian, the very man who talks like this
Frequented their vile gatherings.

Julian. What's this, Antony?

Antony. I think I was once there.

Julian. And how came that?

Antony. I was your emissary.

Julian. Worthy man!

Forgive my doubt; for Truth makes not her residence
In places, nor in methods, but in men.

Antony in hell were a bright angel there,
An emissary from heaven.

Antony. Sir, sir!

Julian. So 'tis!

Tara. What I have said, I have said, and hold to it;
For I have proof of it. Into your ear
He pours the honey-drops of loving counsel,
Intending so to baffle and prevent
Your questionings, that else would soon seek out
His close confederates. And for such a man
I am put by! Oh, how I hate you, sir!

Julian. Tara, be mild.

Tara. No, I will not be mild!
The occasion is not for mildness but for anger.
I hate you, sir; and in my hatred's volume
I only give you back the meaner half
Of your great gift to me. However you trick

My husband with your gravity and care,
Your watchful eyes and mock solicitation—

Julian. Tara, oh, Tara!

Tara. You cannot trick me so:

Oh, no!

Julian. Then I must bid your silence; I,
Who never thought to bid you anything.
Antony, forgive these words, that sprung, I know,
From a too tender quality to receive
Imagined evils.

Antony. They were most untrue.

I will not say how false they were.

Tara. Untrue!

Sir, in the specious arts of counterfeit
You are most accomplished.

Julian. Be silent there!

I now command you.

Tara. Oh, all's over now.

I have loved overmuch, and love has failed me.

I shall seek out a way to end all grief,

Even though it gush the red blood over me.

There will none to pity, none whose sight

Will not be glad to see it, and foretell

A kingdom's peace to flow from such a scene.

I hate you, sir; but you have conquered me:

And he whom best I loved has put your foot

Upon this destined neck. I hope this thought

Will bring a subsequent pity from you. [*Exit TARA.*

Julian.

Tara!

Where do you go? This will unseat my reason.
There she has gone! Oh, then, thou God in heaven,
Will anguish add to trouble till my soul
Sink with the weight of it? Note, Antony,
How I am noosed in the strong coils of Fate!
What can a man do?—But I must after her.
Go, summon Stephen, Brabo, and all the rest;
I shall be soon there, and with your grave aid—
Which I much prize—we must then seek to untie
This twisted knot. I must go to the queen.

[They go out separately each way.]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Throne Room of Palace. Discovers ANTONY speaking with a soldier. Enter JULIAN; whereupon ANTONY dismisses the soldier, who goes out saluting JULIAN.*

Julian. Ah, Antony, I am glad to find you here.
I wished some words with you; and came thus early
In hope of it.

Antony. Sir, and I too am glad.
For on this very hour's quick wings I have learnt
That the whole army marshals for mutiny,
Urged on by Brabo.

Julian. Oh! It moves me not.
I am past all that.

Antony. 'Tis never wish of mine
To give a harsh or petulant word of counsel:
But as I learn it, this is grown a thing
That asks a hand to pluck the seat of it,
Crush its occasion. Brabo, in fine, should go.

Julian. Oh, Brabo is nothing now: a coin whose stamp
Has currency in another age. Look, Antony:
Forgive the queen's rough usage of your loyalty.

It hurt me greatly.

Antony. Do not speak of it.

I know you trust me; and am well content.

Julian. Trust you! I think, just at this bitter moment,

If doubt of you made entry into me,

'Twould break the colour and the hope o' the earth,

And snap my faith in good. You wonder at me!

Antony. I do indeed.

Julian. I wave my faith of you

As a sick man might wave before his eyes

The figure of his health.

Antony. But why like this?

Julian. Did you not say that Brabo in this palace

Implies a weapon aimed beneath this breast?

Antony. I did not say it; I have hinted it.

Julian. Brabo shall not be banished.

Antony. But what's this?

Has a new trouble come on you?

Julian. Trouble, Antony,

Is the chief business of the world. That's nothing.

But they who find it, and can tell their life,

And say, this is a bolt the gods have thrown,

I have not sown the seed that now is sprung—

Well, they are fortunate. I cannot say so.

I think you must have often laughed at me

For being a love-sick bungler.

Antony. Oh, no!—no!

Emphatically not.

Julian. Oh, you are always honest:
Except when you are kind.

Antony. Sir, what is this
Has seized your happy mind, and wrapt it round
With so profound and dark a melancholy?

Julian. Tell me, Antony! Have you not sometimes
seen

A man, too heavily weighted with his burdens,
Step delicately on a chosen path,
Thinking to clear his mind of other things
By fascination of a straight pursuit?

Antony. I have.

Julian. So will I pick out justice with
This fretful band of men. No more, no less,
But just the perfect balance of the beam,
Wins me to-day. Not now for love of it,
But for my own mind's ease.

Antony. What more has grieved you?

Julian. If it imperils life, I do not care.
For Life—she of the dark mysterious eyes
And swift ironic smile, she of the brow
That disappears in night—has trapped my feet
Into a snare. Yet lest it mean my life,
Here is a token for your memory,
If I have won your love, a ring to wear,
My friend, always for me.

Antony. It is the queen's!

Julian. Is it? Perhaps it was.

Antony. Sir—not her majesty?

Julian. So you have thought it too! It makes me seem

The more a child that you have thought it too.
How can I blame her? They are wise who hope
To hit at higher stations for themselves;
And they are wise who make themselves secure.
And yet she was to me
Love's symbol: loving her I reached faint hands
Into those secret places where sits Beauty
With further prospect of abundant Life.
She was Life to me;
And so whene'er I doubted, I crushed Doubt.

Antony. Sir, sir, sir.

Julian. Think what it means to me. I must love her;

I must indeed; howe'er it seem to empty
My proper manhood, all my life's astray
Unless I do. Yet how can I love one
Who thinks me but a ladder's rung to reach
Ambition's goal?

Antony. I think she loves you, sir.

Julian. Well, so do I. Yet if you loved me so,
I would return your gift to you. My God,
I have a life to lead of this! Think, Antony,
A long, long life to live!

Enter a soldier.

Antony. Are they without?

Soldier. Sir, all of them.

Julian. Antony, no more of this!

I have a strange delight in balancing
The beam of Justice. God, I think I'll be
Dispassionate and mystical in it.

Enter STEPHEN, BRABO, MARK, LYOF, and some others.

Stand where you will, I care not; for our care
Has swoln too great to be punctilious.

It is its own solemnity.—What is it, Antony?

Antony. Peter and Serge are yet to come.

Julian. Yes, yes!

Why are they absent? Must I ever have
These suckers waiting on me? Damn them, no!
For I will not! I'll strip them from my limbs
And toss them to these hounds here. Ah!

Enter SERGE and PETER.

You two,

Why are you late?

Serge. But, sir, we are not late.

Julian. Stiff-necked? Why, then, I'll give you cause
to be

Stiff-necked. I'll check in you your satisfaction;
I'll dim your coxcomb's feathers, knowing well

That all the plumage that you love so well
Was won for you from these too honourable fingers.
Oh, yes: I know.

Peter. How have I grieved you, sir?
I would not do that for a thousand honours:
Believe me, I would not.

Julian. Peter, aside!
You are better than your place, and better far
The manner of its getting.

Antony. Sir, be careful.
This altogether spoils that proper cause
Whereto we have foregathered here.

Julian. And so
Have I won your reproof, my Antony?
I would exchange that, having won it now,
For anything you'd wish for.—Gentlemen,
Forgive me! I am somewhat overstrung.
These broils have hatched in me a terrible brood
Of fiends that ride the torments of my brain.
When last we met thus, freely as man to man
I spoke with you, begging you to lay deep
Your differences: despite which, and despite
Your unctuous promises, broils and strife arose.
Enough of that! The immediate matter is
Our queen was foully slandered.

Serge. Yes, she was!
And I am here to prove it; and to charge—

Julian. Stop!—Prince Serge, I would not gladly unleash

My straining anger, for I am overtried.
 Bridle your wagging tongue, and answer only
 When I wish you to speak.—What was I saying?

Antony. The matter of her majesty.

Julian. Yes.

What's your response?

Stephen. What you have said is true.

I spoke the words.

Julian. Stephen, do you admit them?

Stephen. They are past proof. Yet I would like to add
 The reasons why I spoke them. May I do so?

Julian. On, on!

Stephen. First, I was tempted to my anger
 By a most supercilious loon—

Julian. Be careful!

Stephen. Yet so it was. And for my second count—
 Sire, kings are shrouded from the commonalty;
 The populous murmurs of the market-place
 Wound not the arrassed silence of your courts,
 Nor win your royal ear. Once it did so:
 Once did the quarrel of the vulgar street
 Break these hot silences: once, if but once;
 And came upon my tongue. That's my excuse,
 If it be wanted.

Julian. Market's word! The streets!
 People's complaint! My God, it cannot be!

Stephen. Yet so it is.

Julian. The commonalty's shame!

Oh, God, oh, God!—Antony, is this thing true?
Antony. Not that I know of, sir.

Julian. Why do you halt
In your repudiation?

Stephen. Sire, 'tis true.

I did but voice the people—

Julian. In God's name
Have you no bounds or limits to put to
Your insolence?—Oh, Antony! Oh, Antony!

Antony. Julian!

[*JULIAN goes agitatedly out of the room, followed by*
ANTONY.

Peter. What terrible thing is this?

Brabo. There has been dissension
Among the country's enemies; whereby truth
And honesty are like to win.

Serge. I'll leave
Before the traitorous talk gets under way.

[*Exit SERGE.*

Stephen. Friends, do you think I caused this?
Rather than that

I suffer any shame. But what I said
Was out of all proportion to a grief
So terrible—

Enter a servant of the court.

Servant. Is the Count Stephen here?

Stephen. What is it you want with me?

Servant.

You are sent for, sir.

The king is in a swoon.

Stephen (to PETER).

Come you with me!

[Exeunt STEPHEN and PETER, followed by servant.]

Brabo. The very hour to strike our punctual blow

Has now arrived. Look, sirs, it is apparent

There is a cleavage in the opposite camp,

And that's our hope for one stroke to end all—

Lyof. No, no: not now! Are there not sorrows enough

Without our swelling up their number?

Brabo.

Lyof,

What's this new turn?

Lyof.

Well, is it not so, Brabo?

Never saw I a man so whipped with pain

As our good king was. God, it seemed as though

Hell's darkest fiends were let loose in his brain:

I never shall forget it.

Brabo.

'Tis our business

To save him from those fiends that whip him so:

This harlot queen is one, and her two brothers

Who date their honours from her tainted self.—

Oh, fiddlesticks! it is the first of tactics

To loose your sudden charge on fields whereon

Your enemy lies scattered, where each man

Doubts his next neighbour, and where every unit

Forswears command, without a rallying centre.

And such a moment's this.

Mark.

There spoke your horseman!

But if you want a reason, friends, there's one
More pressing than all others.

Brabo. Good: and that is?

Mark. Stephen's impressionable. This thing has
touched him

And made him gentle again. Did you not see
The crystal tenderness brim in his eyes
To see the king so wrought and so distressed?

And more! Did you not see him open out
His sudden love unto the queen's young brother?

Brabo. Yes, that is so. (*To LYOF.*) But is it not
your turn

To set the guard to-night?

Lyof. Yes; but we cannot

Attack the king!

Brabo. Oh, Lyof, Lyof, Lyof!

Lyof. What was your plan then?

Brabo. To extract the king

By subtle lure of danger for these princes
Whom, though he love not, yet he must protect;
That thus, the way being clear, we and the queen—
We in the person of our deputies—
May settle accounts together.

Lyof. Do you think

This can succeed?

Brabo. Without a doubt of it.

And being to-night will be the better, for
They will not think we hope to hack so soon.

Yet this is not fit place to talk: come now,
And in my own room reason out the thing!

[*Exeunt together.*]

SCENE 2.—*The Ante-chamber to the Royal Apartments.*

The door leading outwards is to the left; whereas the door leading to the royal rooms lies at the back, to the extreme right. Beside this door a faint light burns; and in its glimmer, beyond the intervening darkness, Lyof is seen on guard, with drawn sword. He paces now and then between the two doors, generally remaining, however, leftward near the outer door. A knock falls gently on outer door.

Lyof. Who is it there?

Enter a messenger muffled.

Mess. I have an urgent message for the king, sir.

Lyof. Whom do you come from?

Mess. I was bidden give you this.

Lyof. Ah! Have you your message ready, then?

Mess. I have.

Lyof. Discompose yourself as though you had just arrived in haste.

(Knocking on the inner door.) Sir, sir!

Julian's voice from within. Who is it there?

Lyof. A messenger for you, sire.

Julian's voice. Who is it? and what is it?

Lyof. He will not say; only that it's urgent.

[*A pause.*

Julian's voice. Curse it! A moment, then.

Lyof (to messenger). Discompose yourself. Appear out of breath.

[*He goes over to the outer door, standing on guard there, with his back to the ante-chamber. Enter JULIAN, followed by TARA.*

Tara. What—what is it?

Julian. I say, only a belated message.—Well, what is it?

Mess. Sir, the princes are surrounded in their rooms by a sudden treachery, defending themselves with difficulty. I have now run from there—

Tara. Oh! oh!

Julian. Silence!—The princes Serge and Peter?

Mess. It must have been. I could not tell who was attacking. There seemed some scuffle with swords. It was all disorderly; and I ran straight to you.

Julian. You did well. A minute, and I am with you.

[*He goes back into the inner room hurriedly; re-appearing almost at once with weapons and buckling on a sword.*

There's trouble abroad to-night: it's in the air.

Antony warned me.—Curse it!—And in case

Authority fail me there, I am well weaponed;

Which will, I think, serve; ay, and ease me too.—

Why will it not catch? Damn it! There: 'tis broken.

All things conspire against me. Buckle me on!

Tara. Oh, Julian, do not go!

Julian. It is your brother.

Tara. I know: I know.

Julian. Your loving brother Serge.

Tara. I know: I know. But there is mystery out:

The wide night brims with it. It frets my nerve,
And fills me full of terror. Do not go!

My Julian, do not go!

Julian. Ah! (*To messenger.*) You, my friend,

Summon Lord Antony to the place: and swift!

Lift a quick leg! [*Exit messenger.*]

Can you not help me, Tara?

Oh, curse the thing!

[*Hurls scabbard and belt away, retaining naked sword.*]

Lyof. May I not help you, sir?

Julian. No: keep your place.

Tara. Julian, my husband,

Julian!

You are cold to me. No, do not turn away.

Dearest! dear heart! do you not think I love you?

Julian!

Julian. This is no time for that.

No; do not hold me! I must go. There bids
Occasion's urgent note.

Tara. But do not go,
And leave me to the peril that flows after
Your vanished presence.

Julian. Please uncoil these arms,
Or I must reave them.

Tara. Julian, Julian, Julian!

Julian. Antony bade me see the green earth melt,
And palaces rock, before I stirred to-night:
Antony, your enemy Antony! So now
You'll let me go.

Tara. No, no: he's very wise.

Julian. He warned me that black mischief was
awake—

This is its stirring!—ay, and that its eyes
Were bold and very venomous. He said that;
And he's his country's enemy! Yes, he is;
You said it, you! God, it is like the laugh
Of monstrous demons.

Tara. Julian, come with me!
My dearest, dearest heart!

Julian. Madam, aside!
The time is urgent.

Tara. No, no, no; it's not.
Yet if it is, stay here for my protection,
My king!

Julian. God's heaven, unwind me! Let me go!

Tara. It may be to your death.

Julian. What do I care?

I shall be quit o' the things that wreck my life.

[Exit hastily through outer door.]

Tara. Oh, gone, gone, gone!

And all the terror of the silent night

Strikes through my soul. Oh! oh!—Yet I must seem

Calm and possessed. But this heavy night is deathly,

And full of terror. Terror is all abroad,

Treading the palace with a cushioned step.

Oh, why did Julian go? and he so cold

And bitter with me!—God, what's that? Oh, sir,
you!

You struck me to new terror.

Lyof.

Madam, inside!

I beg you.

Tara.

Sir, remember that a crown

Circles my brow, howe'er unmeet occasion

Strike harsh anomaly through its splendour, or dash

That golden fact with darkness.

Lyof.

Crowns and splendours

Are nothing now. Inside!

Tara.

Sir, what is this?

Impertinent to your queen! Do you forget

I am your queen? Yes, scan me o'er! but royalty

Is resident in this frame.

Lyof.

It would much grieve me

To put you aside; but, madam, it must be done

If you disturb my duty here.

Tara.

What's this:

Your hands on me? Have all the stars fallen out
From their fixed orbits?—But—is your name Lyof?
Lyof. It may be, may not be.

Tara. Why then, friend Lyof,
Here's my rich hand to kiss. To place lips there
There are some would fill my lap with rubies and
gold.

Yet do not fear: it is my hand, good Lyof:
Caress it!

Lyof. This is no court.—By God, I will though!—
But no: this is no court.

Tara. Not to put lips
On my soft hands? Then go and fasten me
Those clanging doors. Some Arch-fear, with its
breath
Blows icily through me.

Lyof. Madam, inside, I say!
Come, come! Nay, if I must do so, I must,
And more, I will. [*Pushes her within.*]

Tara. Oh, what is this? Has power
Slipt me? First Julian, and now this. See, sir,
I will go in; I will indeed. Oh! oh!

[*Goes weeping within.*]
Lyof. Heaven, how she stirred my flesh! She mad-
dened me

Almost to leap to failure. It was thus
The king was snared then; and small wonder at it.
Even now my memory aches to think my hands

Took hold upon her flesh.—

[Enter two men stealthily: both evidently soldiers, though muffled and masked heavily.]

And who are you?

And who sent you?

Soldier. A patriot and a soldier.

Lyof. And in good time. You'll find her there within:

So make an end.—Faith, but I like it not.

Soldier. Shall we go in?

Lyof. Oh, what you will! Yes, go!

[The two proceed into the royal rooms.]

Lyof. That I were out of this! Up to the hilt

Am I in blood, and its disastrous stain

Will be on all my days and all my nights

To fright me, and make even my kindest things

Seem cruelty.—What was that? No, it was nothing!

Oh, no, 'twas nothing.—Make the yellow sun

A scarlet horror; speckle the pale moon

With drops of crimson.—Oh, good God! what's that?

[A single cry comes from within: and then silence.]

It is the deed—the deed.

Re-enter soldiers.

First soldier. Well, it is done,

And I am glad of it.

Second soldier. Slaying is easy

If once the blood is up; but to kill women

And to kill coldly—Ugh!

Lyof. Did you hear footsteps?

Listen! It cannot be the king. I think it is.

I would not face him for kingdoms.

[He listens a moment or so at the outer door; then without a word to the soldiers at the back, he flies silently out.]

First soldier. He's gone. Stay there in the dark.

Second soldier. And I think some more with him.

Creep down there in the dark. When they have gone inside, we must creep out.

Enter JULIAN with ANTONY and PETER.

Antony. Sir, sir, where is your—

Julian. Hist! the queen's within;
And likely enough asleep.

Antony. Your guard, sir; Lyof;
Where is he?

Julian. Yes. But what is this? Serge, Stephen,
Brabo, and Mark, all indiscoverable: the palace
Dark as a vaulted tomb! And now Lyof!
'Tis all impenetrable as a hell.

But come now, tell me, how, while Serge was gone,
Peter appeared with you? For love of mercy,
Is this a trickery, a prestidigitation?
Do I dream, or am I awake?

Peter. Lord Antony

Sent for us both, with friendliest advice
To shelter with him, saying the fangs of hate

Were sucked beneath a treacherous lip for us.
But Serge refused to go.

Julian. Yet I left Lyof
Here: now he's gone, clean gone! (*To ANTONY.*) Why
do you look
So strangely at me? What new fiendish thing
Will this strange night unbosom?

Antony. Oh, it was nothing.
I'll go discover Stephen. I must think
He can be found.

Julian. But tell me, Antony,
Why did you look so at me through the dark?
And why does your voice shake so?

Antony. It was nothing.
I'll go discover Stephen if I may.

Julian. Oh, what is it? See, I am in the toils
Of maidenly fears. I'll doff them then. Yes, go;
Discover Stephen; bring him here—my pledge for it,
He is honest and he is true.

Antony. Fold up these doors
And hasp them stoutly, letting no one in
Till my voice sound without.

Julian. Shall I admit
My lack of proper courage with that cowardice?

Antony. Yes; I have reasons for it.

Julian. Then to please you
I'll even do that. Go quickly.

[*Exeunt ANTONY and PETER.*]

Julian (hasping door). 'Tis a night
That chills the very marrow of my bones.
It strikes presentiments of dread through me,
And clammy evil. I'll go comfort Tara.
I was too harsh with her. She was but frail:
God help us all, we are all sinful and frail.

[He goes within.]

First soldier. We are cooped and caged.

Second soldier. We must break out. Softly; we can
do it when he is well inside.

First soldier. There! he has found it.

Second soldier. It's nothing. Keep you cool, or we are
trapped.

First soldier. God in heaven, I hear him within.

Second soldier. Enough of that! Ah!

[A loud cry, with lights thrown on, from within.]

Second soldier. Curse you for a coward! Crouch back;
he's coming out.

Re-enter JULIAN.

Julian. My God, what monstrous punishment is this!
Dead, and bespoiled with blood—Oh! oh!
My fairest darling, bloodied with the stroke
Of violence—God—I never shall pluck that sight
Out of my memory, never till judgment crack,
And Time's last shameful sorrow be unfurled,
Never, never!

Oh, and I parted from her in anger! Tara,
My dearest, you last shrunk away in fear
From my cold eyes, you wept and asked a kiss
I would not give, you clung to me, and I,
I heaved you off! My loveliest, yet I loved you,
I did indeed.—Oh, but this darkness tears me!

[Goes to turn on the lights.]

But what was that? In God's name
What was it?—No, it is my fearful nerves.—
There it is again! Whatever you are like to be,
I fear you not! Ah!

[A soldier leaps on him, and they grapple.]

Oh, I can grapple too,
And take its fury like a medicine. Curse you!
I am young, but I can grapple.

[The other soldier stabs him from behind.]

Coward's stroke!

I am done. Oh, stop them, stop them!

*[He reaches forward as the two soldiers fling open
the doors and fly: only to fall back exhausted
and dying. Presently enter ANTONY, PETER,
STEPHEN, and a young officer.]*

Stephen. Antony, the doors are open, and you said
They would be closed.

Antony. Then it was not the king
That loosed them. Having once pronounced his
pledge
It would require a strange and evil thing

To make him break it ever.—Sir; my liege;
Your majesty!—'Tis silent as 'tis dark.

Stephen. Whatever's this? Oh, Antony, Antony!
It is the king. Bring lights, man, for I think
His life is spent. [ANTONY *turns on the lights.*

Antony. My poor frail king!

Stephen. And, Antony,
He never knew, I think I never knew,
How much I loved him.

Antony. Censure beats itself
When it can no more turn itself to good,
And Folly in nothing so condemns itself
As in the spent remorse that follows after.
So rail not, Stephen! Let your sorrow flow,
For that's a manly function; but cease words
That whip your memory.

Stephen. Look, as he lies there,
Was he not even a man to win our hearts?
And yet now, all that nobleness and vigour
Is spilled and wasted.

Antony. Peace: you'll make me too
As heavy-eyed as you; and it's enough
To have a heavy heart.—What is it, Peter?

Peter. She, too, lies dead within.

Antony. I guessed at that;
And find its upshot here.

Stephen. She too! My God!
And then there's Serge.

Peter.

Serge!

Antony.

Serge! What do you mean?

You had not told us.

Stephen.

But you rushed me off

Before I'd told you half.—This is your tale:

Tell it yourself, as you half told it me.

Officer. Its colour's lost in this.—They dragged him out—

Yes, I was there, warring against myself,

And saw all of it, sickened because his terror

Made all their anger butchery. They took him

Outside the palace; and when I saw them strike him,

Bound and defenceless as he was, I fled

And came to Stephen.

Stephen.

And he scarce had told me

When you swept on me like a troubled tempest,

Bearing me hither. It was half my blame;

I hated him. But if the king had lived

I could have taken him to me like a brother

For all my hatred.

Antony.

Do you hear these steps,

This shuffling multitude that through the night

Foams like the angry tide of a muttering sea

Upon the margin of the earth?

Officer.

My lord, 'tis they:

Brabo and Mark in leadership of them,

And multitudes following them!

Stephen (drawing his sword).

And thank God for it!

Now I will clear my share.

Antony.

Put up that folly!

I have a weapon for them, at whose edge
A stranger havoc shall o'erwhelm them, look you,
Than they have reckoned for. And to its strength
This dead and maculate clay shall add its power,
For all it be its last.—See, here they come!
Leave it to me!

Enter BRABO and MARK with a host.

Good morning, gentlemen.—

It is the morning now.—Was this the sight
You came to see?

Mark.

Oh, heaven! this was a bungle.

Brabo. This lies not at our charges; for our blows
Were only aimed—

Antony.

I did not speak to you.—

Gentlemen, was this the sight you came to see?
You come with bloody hands, stained with the life
Of one high prince; a queen lies dead within;
But see the fiercer climax of your hate,
This clay that once replete was with high hopes,
Quick with nobility!

Brabo.

Come, Antony,

We aimed not here. This was a bungler's blow
That fell astray—

Antony. Arrest them, Brabo and Mark!

Brabo. What, will you touch me?

[STEPHEN and PETER rapidly seize and disarm both
BRABO and MARK, whom several others join in
holding.

Cowards, whom I led

Barking at heel. (To ANTONY.) Where's your authority?

Antony. The regency devolves on me: its papers
Are sworn and sealed, and will be patent soon.
Where's Lyof?

Several voices. He took horse and fled the night.

Antony. Bear them away! Their trial shall follow
after. [BRABO and MARK are borne away.

The last succession being out, I appoint
Peter as monarch, as my powers permit me,
Subject to ratification at the Senate.

Yet do not hail him; we've a sadder business
For our attention. Bear this poor clay up,
And lay him by the queen he once so loved.

The dawn is punctual to our obsequies:
See where it paints the silver casements gold,
Dashing the clouds with rubies! Oh, my king,
No dawn shall ever win my love again.

[JULIAN'S body is borne solemnly within.

QUEEN TARA was written in the autumn of 1910, and produced by Mr. Henry Herbert at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, in February 1913, with the following cast:

<i>Julian</i>	.	.	.	HENRY HERBERT
<i>Serge</i>	.	.	.	HORACE BRAHAM
<i>Peter</i>	.	.	.	H. PARDOE WOODMAN
<i>Antony</i>	.	.	.	JOHN CAIRNS
<i>Stephen</i>	.	.	.	CHARLES WARBURTON
<i>Lyof</i>	.	.	.	BASIL RATHBONE
<i>Brabo</i>	.	.	.	DUNCAN YARROW
<i>Mark</i>	.	.	.	BASIL OSBORNE
<i>Hagen</i>	.	.	.	EDMUND SULLEY
<i>1st Soldier</i>	.	.	.	H. S. BICKMORE
<i>2nd Soldier</i>	.	.	.	FRANK SULMUND
<i>A Servant</i>	.	.	.	FRANCIS W. DENMAN
<i>Messenger</i>	.	.	.	FRANK FREEMAN
<i>Tara</i>	.	.	.	Miss GLADYS VANDERZEE
<i>Cathna</i>	.	.	.	Miss BRUNHILD MULLER
<i>A Page</i>	.	.	.	Miss MURIEL DAWN

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